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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
NATIONAL FOREIGN ASSESSMENT CENTER

22 February 1980

MEMORANDUMZAMBIA: SUCCESSION SCENARIOS 

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Summary

Zambian President Kenneth Kaunda, 55 years old and in generally good health, probably will remain in office for the foreseeable future. There is no serious political or military opposition to him at this time, we see no signs of any challenge to his leadership taking shape, and Kaunda has no intention of stepping down, despite some fairly serious domestic problems. He was reelected by a strong majority in 1978, and we expect him to stand for reelection when his term expires in 1983.

Should Kaunda die in office or resign, a constitutional mechanism for succession exists. We expect the transition would be relatively smooth and that a successor holding to Kaunda's policies would emerge. The constitution also provides for the removal of the

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This memorandum was prepared by , Africa Division, Office of Political Analysis at the request of the NSC Staff, and was coordinated with the Office of Strategic Research, the Directorate of Operations, and the National Intelligence Officer for Africa. Research was completed on 20 February 1980. Comments and queries are welcome and may be directed to the Chief, Africa Division, Office of Political Analysis,

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1 president on the grounds of inability to perform his duties or misconduct. In such cases, the transition could be marred by factional disputes within the government and ruling party and probably would lead to the selection of a compromise president. In the unlikely event of a military coup--the *Zambian Army* traditionally has been apolitical--regional or tribal as well as factional interests probably would lead the military to move rather quickly, at least ostensibly, to create a civilian government. The military has never been considered a legitimate claimant to power by most *Zambians*, who question its effectiveness and competency.

### Constitutional Provisions

2 The *Zambian* constitution of 1973 provides measures for the replacement of the president in the event of his death in office, mental or physical incapacity, or misconduct. In all these situations, the secretary general of the ruling United National Independence Party (UNIP) automatically assumes office and is required to call an election within three months. According to the constitution, the existing parliament remains intact as does the government hierarchy.

2 The secretary general convenes a special UNIP conference to select a new president of the party, who automatically becomes the single candidate for president of *Zambia*. The conference includes the members of UNIP's Central Committee, members of parliament, district and regional government officials, representatives from organized labor, and up to 600 delegates from each of *Zambia's* eight provinces. The presidential candidate runs for election nationally on a yes-no ballot. If he is rejected, the conference reconvenes to choose another candidate. Kaunda received over 80 percent approval in December 1978.

2 If the president is suspected of being mentally or physically incapacitated, a majority of the UNIP Central Committee and the cabinet can request that the Chief Justice appoint a board to investigate. If the board finds that the president is not capable of discharging his duties, the party secretary general takes over and sets in motion the electoral machinery.

2 The president also can be removed if he is found guilty of misconduct. If at least one-third of the National Assembly signs a motion alleging that the president has violated the constitution or has engaged in gross misconduct, the speaker of the National Assembly must call a session of parliament within 21 days to consider the motion. Two-thirds of the members must approve the motion for it to pass. If passed, the Chief Justice appoints a tribunal to investigate the matter and report back to the Assembly. If the allegation of misconduct is substantiated, a three-fourths vote of the Assembly is required to remove the president, thereby paving the way for a new election. The president has the option of dissolving parliament and calling a new election before the vote to avoid the embarrassment of impeachment. The constitution does not address the issue of whether the president can run again, although the party would be unlikely to choose him under these circumstances.

#### Potential Successors

1 If Kaunda were to die or leave office today, Mainza Chona, currently UNIP Secretary General, would assume office until a successor--possibly Chona himself--was chosen. Chona would have the advantage as a longtime close associate of Kaunda. Moreover, Chona--like Kaunda--does not have any close regional or tribal ties that could give rise to charges of political favoritism. Chona probably would continue Zambia's nonaligned foreign policy; he is generally sympathetic to the West.

1 On the other hand, if Kaunda were removed against his will through legal means, Chona's prospects as a successor would be diminished by his close ties to Kaunda; he would not be acceptable to those who initiated steps against Kaunda.

4 The lack of a clear-cut successor probably would provoke an intense struggle between two factions within the government and party. The first faction is made up mostly of government officials and some party members who favor close ties with the West, noninvolvement in African liberation struggles, and a larger role for free enterprise in the Zambian economy. These politicians believe Kaunda should

focus on social and economic development before turning to defense and security concerns. Most church and trade union officials, members of parliament, and old-school military officers (especially those trained in the West) espouse these views. The leading exponents of these views and thus potential candidates for the presidency are:

- Alex Chikwanda, a Bemba from Northern Province, who serves as Minister of Agriculture.
- Humphrey Mulemba, a Kaonde from Northwestern Province, who is the chairman of the appointments and disciplinary committee in the UNIP Central Committee.
- Wilson Chakulya, a Bemba from Luapula Province, who is Foreign Minister.

The second group is composed predominantly of party members and a smaller number of government officials. The members of this group would like Zambia to establish close ties with Moscow, prepare to meet what they view as an inevitable military struggle with South Africa, and strengthen government control of Zambia's already predominantly state-controlled economy. This faction has a sympathetic audience on Zambian university campuses and among some military officers who want improvements in military training and equipment, irrespective of its origin. Politicians who might represent this group in a succession struggle are:

- Alexander Grey Zulu, an Ngoni from Eastern Province, who serves as State Secretary for Defense and Security.
- Joshua Lumina, a Tonga from Southern Province, who is Minister of Financial and Technical Cooperation.
- Edward Mungone Liso, an Ila from Southern Province who serves as deputy chairman of the political and legal subcommittee of the UNIP Central Committee.

Because these two factions are fairly equally represented in Zambian politics, the chances that a contender from either group could win the nomination are slim. The party probably would be forced to fall back on a compromise

candidate who would probably share power behind the scenes with a small group of kingmakers. Those who might emerge as president include:

--Daniel Lisulo, a Lozi from Western Province, who is Prime Minister.

--Reuben Kamanga, a Chewa from Eastern Province, who is chairman of the UNIP Central Committee's political and legal subcommittee.

--Wesley Nyirenda, a Tumbuka from Eastern Province, who is currently the chairman of the economic and finance committee of the UNIP Central Committee.

#### Extralegal Means of Succession

Barring an unpredictable act of violence or accident, any attempt to remove Kaunda by extraconstitutional means would be led by or require support from the 13,000-man Zambian National Defense Force (ZNDF). Zambian officers generally have stayed out of domestic politics, but many of them are more vocal in their demands for a bigger share of the country's resources since Rhodesian incursions highlighted Zambia's military weaknesses. We believe that one of Kaunda's major motivations in agreeing to acquire Soviet arms was his desire to satisfy military demands and avoid a confrontation with the ZNDF over Zambia's military weakness should the Rhodesian transition process collapse or hostilities with South Africa develop.

It is unlikely that ZNDF Commander Mibenge, a strong Kaunda supporter who was appointed last year, would organize a coup. Middle-grade officers, about whom we know little but who are not as close in tied to the establishment as their commanding officer, probably would be more likely to at against the regime. A small, well-organized group with access to Lusaka probably could take control of State House and other key installations without widespread military support. Its ability to retain power would depend on the backing of the bulk of the military and the civilian population. A tribal or regionally based coup undoubtedly would spark popular unrest, and its leaders probably would be unable to consolidate power, whereas a coup stemming from disgruntlement with Kaunda's economic or foreign policies would be more likely to receive popular support.

A coup attempt by an alliance between a faction within the party or government and elements from the military based on tribal or regional identification is possible, but we believe fairly remote. We have no indication of any conspiratorial linkage between leaders of such groups, which would attract the attention of the loyal Zambian Intelligence and Security Service.

Any government installed by a coup would be preoccupied with defense and security needs. Close ties with a reliable supplier of military equipment and training would be a major priority and probably the determining factor in Zambia's foreign policy, particularly if it is faced with growing instability in southern Africa. Kaunda's decision to purchase arms from the USSR gives the Soviets a clear advantage with such a government.

SUBJECT: Zambia: Succession Scenarios

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